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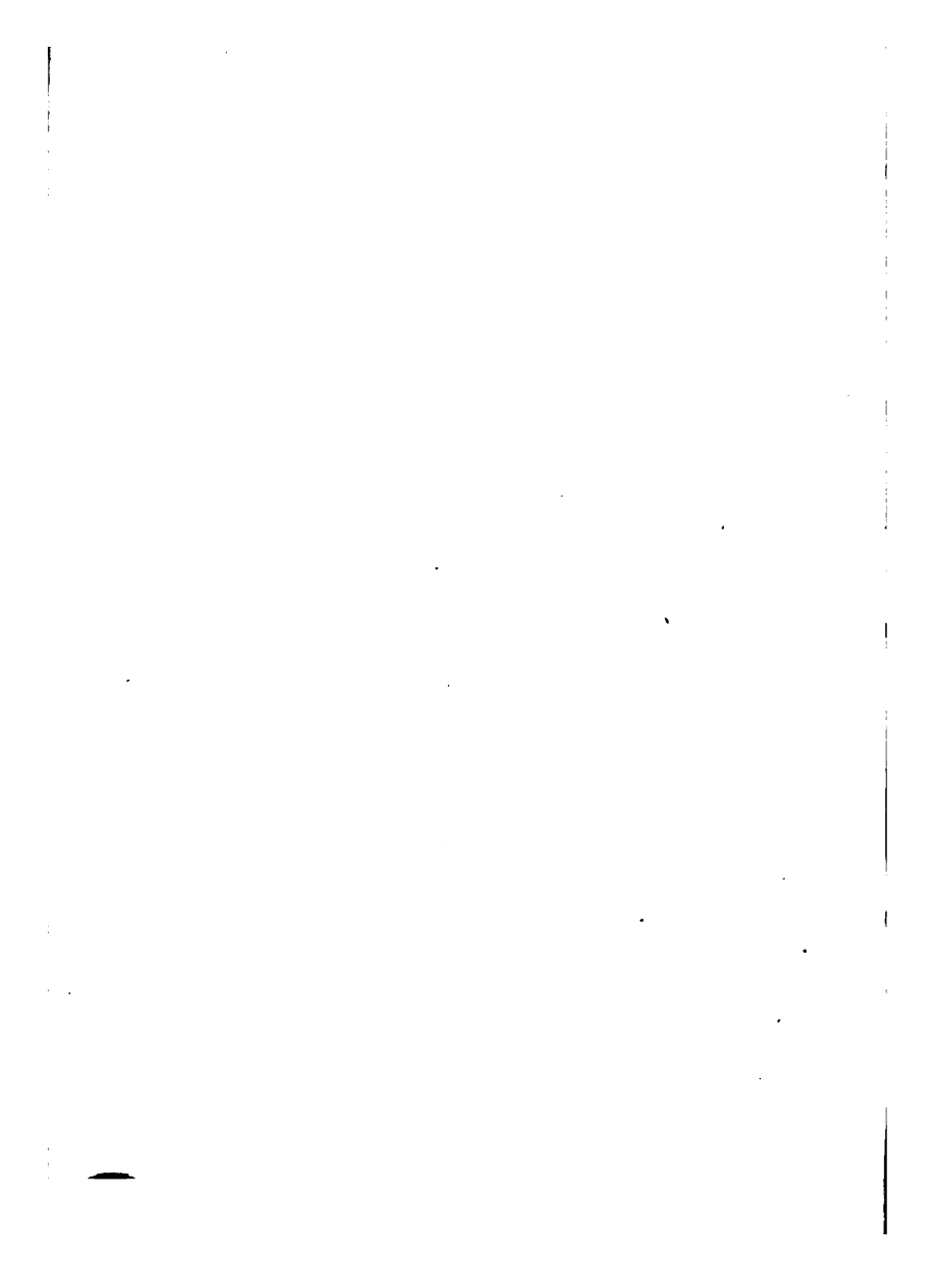
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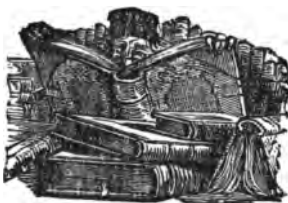
GOOD FORM

# DINNERS

CEREMONIOUS AND UNCEREMONIOUS

*AND THE MODERN METHODS  
OF SERVING THEM*

BY THE AUTHOR OF "CARDS, THEIR SIGNIFICANCE AND  
PROPER USES," AND "SOCIAL ETIQUETTE  
OF NEW YORK "



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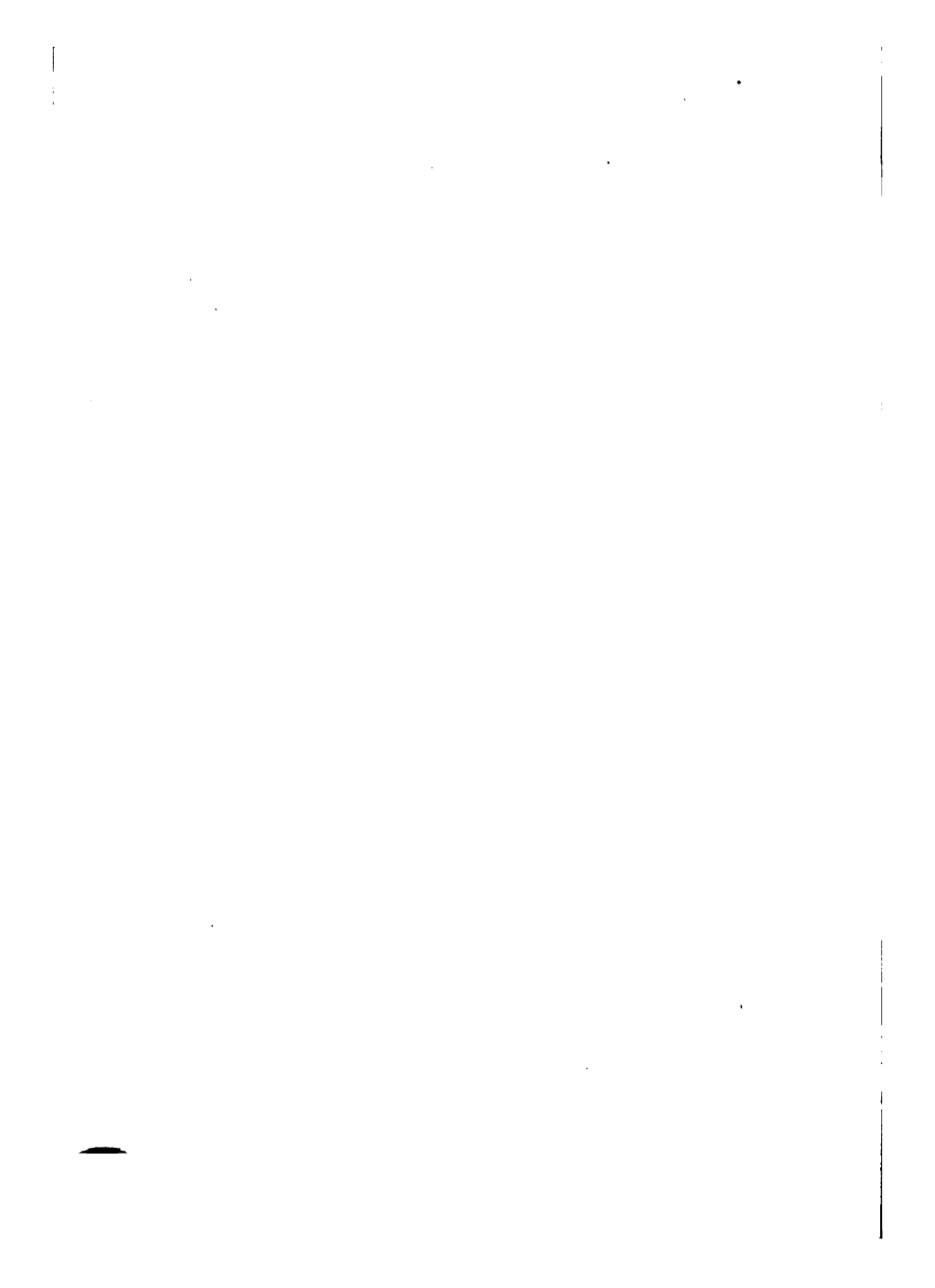
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GOOD FORM

# DINNERS.

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## FORMAL DINNERS AND DINERS.

THE success and pleasure of a ceremonious dinner depends upon a judicious selection of guests who are harmoniously contrasted in their tastes, talents and ages, and upon grouping them happily together. A party wholly made up of exceptionally interesting and ambitious talkers not infrequently stirs a babel of voices, but the subjects about which they are eloquent are not as clearly intelligible as a host would have them.

They are discreet entertainers who invite such men and women to sit at meat together as are inclined to talk and listen, alternately with others who are not exceptional conversationalists, but are quick to appreciate a nimble wit and a fine sentiment. Many of one's dearest friends have little to bring to a dinner party but discriminating smiles. With such guests and fine courtesy, and with, also, a quietly served, properly arranged dinner, even though those who add no brill-

iancy are a majority, the dinner is a foregone success from a social standpoint. Seldom does it happen that husband and wife are equally eloquent of speech, but now and then they are; hence the custom, and indeed the strict etiquette, of always seating them apart at dinner.

An accomplished *conteuse* is entitled to a partner who has a talent for listening, provided the guests are too many for general conversation. The man who talks easily and well should, of course, be paired with a woman who is willing to be silent, but who has the tact, or the gift, to call out her escort's best thoughts and his most scintillating *mots*.

One of several reasons why American dinners are usually more interesting than those in England, is, that there all guests are seated according to a varying inherited rank, rather than for especial or distinguished conversational acquirements.

Educated and finely-bred persons need have no tastes or pursuits in common with their fellows at table, and yet be all the more interested and interesting because of novel combinations of thought.

A delightful harmony is thus evoked, but the hostess cannot always arrange ideal social combinations from the elements at her command. The next best thing for her to do is to distribute her fine talkers and place dull ones in the intervals.

At long and narrow tables, interesting guests may be seated opposite each other, since low decorations

are in favor; and it is not bad form to converse across, as it is in England. In the mother-country those who are *vis-à-vis* are usually farther apart than is customary here, and to talk across the flowers would be to use unpleasantly energetic voices; hence the reasonableness of etiquette that forbids it. The perfect dinner of ceremony includes married and unmarried, elderly and youthful, in agreeable proportions, and an equal number of men and women.

Of course, such a happy selection is sometimes broken at the last hour, but never except by very serious occurrences. A light reason for disappointing a hostess, or more modestly, breaking her plans, is an unpardonable discourtesy. All entertainers know that illnesses and other untoward events may at the last hour deprive them of some one or more of their guests. If there is an even number, as many men as women, and she has no intimate friends or kinspeople whom she can secure at short notice, she orders fewer covers at table and does not feel that her dinner will be wholly a failure. It is the highest compliment to ask a friend at the last moment to take a deserted chair at a dinner; therefore, even if at personal sacrifice, such invitations in polished society are accepted, if possible, at once. It is, also, esteemed the greatest possible kindness to thus drop into and fill an otherwise painful vacancy; especially is it a gracious concession if thereby that foolishly dreaded "thirteen at table" is avoided. A young man or woman who refuses a

dinner invitation that, if accepted, completes a broken number, unless it be through a necessity that is made clear to the hostess, is deemed unamiable and such people are likely to be remembered unpleasantly when a social favor is requested for themselves or one of their friends. Seeking substitutes, in large circles during seasons when there is much gayety and a press of engagements, is sometimes unavailing. When the number has fallen to thirteen, and no fourteenth can be secured, the hostess may depend upon the friendship of some one of her young guests to decline the dinner and come in for coffee in the drawing-room later in the evening, provided he or she has no especially alluring offer of pleasure elsewhere. It is deemed much more courteous, and even assuring, to a hostess who has felt obliged to suggest an absence to a bidden guest, if he or she comes to pass the same evening and assist in entertaining. Such friendly favors are not likely to be unappreciated. Entertainers may care less than their guests about this ill-fabled number, but they should not be unmindful of others. No host can be quite certain but in the silence of some guest's mind this weird and senseless superstition is a torment during a dinner of thirteen people, and long afterwards.

The *bon vivant* insists that there are no more decisive testimonials to the refinements or vulgarities of a rich entertainer than are furnished by his *menus*, and his mode of serving ceremonious dinners; but this asser-

tion may justly be doubted. There is one other witness to his place in the scale of civilization, the testimony of which cannot be questioned. It is his selection and combination of guests, and their manners at his table ; such guests, of course, including persons of varying attainments, but all upon what is recognized as the same social plane.

For methods of grouping guests there can be no rules, etiquette failing to aid a host in the least. Our social distinctions, or differences, being almost wholly self-arranged or personally created, only the clearness of an entertainer's brain and his fine sense of fitness,—influenced not too much by his kindly instincts or warmth of heart,—with an appreciation of his own and other's experiences and observations, can be safely appealed to when grouping a large circle of acquaintances into a series of dinner parties.

## INFORMAL DINNERS AND DINERS.

SMALL dinners, with but eight at table, are the chief charm of social life for those who really care for the society of each other. There is an element of friendliness in such gatherings, a frankness of good feeling, a naturalness of *camaraderie*, and a general interchange of the finest sparkles of wit that are impossible at large dinners where toilettes are grandly impressive, decorations elaborate and expensive, and wines of the most celebrated vintages are so lavishly served that it is impossible not to be impressed with the costliness of it all, rather than with its elegance, its artistic groupings of color and glitter, or even the brilliancy of its table talk that too often does not glow about such a board, because its guests are all more or less subdued by the stateliness of the aggregated appointments of the feast.

The charm of the small informal dinner effaces whatever lack of sumptuousness there may be in its service, its smaller number of courses being entirely harmonious with properly selected guests at a little dinner party.

The youthful belle is not disappointed if she is taken in to dinner by an elderly man, who has no especial gift for entertaining girls; because his reputation for some one or another acquirement makes such a selection of partner for her a distinct compliment, and, besides, the thoughtful hostess will be sure to have arranged that a young man sits at her right.

At small or informal dinners, if the hostess has made sure of having one woman at table who is a fine talker or *raconteuse*, also one brilliant man, neither of whom sacrifices considerateness to wit, or kindness to *repartee*, her entertainment is at once a delight. Other guests should, if possible, include one or two who have a talent for striving or inspiring others to be happy in speech or discussion, and all the others may be listeners who are not lacking in an appreciative semi-silence.

The close observer of attentive and finely comprehending listeners at dinners, and indeed elsewhere, must have noticed that the silence of such is not stillness, also that wordless expressions and responses really reach the talker and stir him to a richer eloquence in grave subjects, and that a keen sparkle scintillates from his anecdotes and quotations such as the most spirited replies sometimes fail to call out.

In a little gathering where humor and a refined and intellectual good fellowship or *camaraderie* is felt, especially if the group includes men of letters, it should not be forgotten by hosts or guests, in distributing

their admiration, either spoken or silent, that to one person is sometimes given a talent for more charming speech than he is able to confide to his pen, while a fellow guest is distinguished for literary brilliancy, but has no conversational accomplishments.

Much might be said in praise or blame of a dinner companionship with men and women that have diverse gifts; but no amount of study or weight of conclusion is able to change their natural gifts and consequent social polish: therefore that host is discreet who brings such persons together at small dinners only, rather than at large ones where making a contrast between such individuals is less likely to reach just conclusions.

It is said that groaning mahogany does not dispose humanity toward generous judgments of those who have neither amused nor admired each other, envy or blame being an habitual factor in indigestion.

If by any mistaken estimate of the conversational talents of an unfamiliar guest, a host or hostess recognizes antagonistic, or perhaps only non-fusible, elements at a small table, only the combined skill of a diplomat and the genius of an angelic peacemaker are sufficient to sail an hospitable craft clear of the Scylla of egotism or the Charybdis of silence.

It requires a masterly ingenuity if one is entertaining persons who are not quite familiar with the best usages of society, and few entertainers are there who are so dexterous as to avoid unsuitable topics, or who



can manage conversation with such skill that there shall be no offensive personal elements introduced.

Of course for selecting one's guests for small dinners there can be no established or even suggesting etiquette, and yet this initial part of entertaining is the one that requires the most adroitness and facility. A woman of experience declares that nothing short of inspiration is of use to her when she is writing out a dinner list.

## DATES OF INVITATIONS.

THE least time that etiquette allows between issuing an invitation to a ceremonious dinner and the dinner itself, is ten days, and not infrequently in New York and Washington six weeks is the interval between the dates of the receipt of dinner cards and the dates engraved or written upon them.

Where social circles are very large and an entertainer very much desires to secure a favorite group of guests, many, or all, of whom have pressing social or other engagements, this method of taking time and friends "by the forelock" is a necessity. A month is a common interval in New York at the height of its social season. In smaller cities and in towns where there are fewer absorptions, entertainers may decide for themselves how extended a time is to be allowed their hoped-for guests, provided that for a formal dinner it be not less than ten days, which interval good form insists upon.

Informal dinners that are called "impromptus," and are, or may be, the most delightful occasions for *camaraderie* and real friendliness, are arranged as their

name suggests ; but in America as no one knows how to be other than deeply devoted to one, or to many interests, humane, professional, industrial or domestic, notice of as many days as it is possible to give is not too much, even for the most uncereemonious of diners.

## FORMS OF CEREMONIOUS INVITATIONS.

AN engraved note is good form, indeed it is *de rigueur* when a formal dinner is given. If it is planned in honor of a distinguished person or persons, his or their names are engraved upon a note of invitation with that of the entertainer, thus :

*To meet*

THE HONORABLE

MR. AND MRS. HENRY JAMES NORTHCOTE,

OF ENGLAND,

*Mr. & Mrs. John Paul Field*

*request the honor*

*of . . . . . company*

*at dinner,*

*on Monday, February tenth,*

*at half-past seven o'clock,*

*205 Philo Street.*

There was a time when it was necessary to engrave R. S. V. P. upon the left lower corner of every invitation, and the residence of the host was then placed at the lower right. Happily we have become so familiar with polite ways that such significant and even commanding letters are no longer necessary upon invitations to dinner. Every person bidden to a dinner replies at once, that his proposed entertainer may ask another to fill his place should he decline. These four letters are offensive to considerate persons, but unhappily they are still essentials upon invitations to entertainments where large numbers are bidden. The host would not but for requested replies know for how many guests to provide.

When a distinguished person arrives unexpectedly in town, and a friend or admirer desires to extend a courteous hospitality to him, and there is no time for the engraving of an especial invitation, a host who has dinner invitations prepared for a season with blanks for guests' names, may use the same, and enclose with each a visiting card upon which is written :

*To meet*

THE HONORABLE

MR. AND MRS. HENRY JAMES NORTHCOTE,

OF ENGLAND.

Only limitations of time permit so unceremonious a method by which to express one's regard for distinguished strangers.

Good form allows several formulas or expressions upon notes of invitation to dinners, and even permits an engraved card for men's dinners, but when issued for both men and women an engraved note is deemed the most elegant. If it is for but one dinner in a season, the date is engraved; but if the same note is to serve for a succession of dinners, a space for its date is left blank, while the day of the week is usually engraved, because it is customary, though by no means strict etiquette, that dinner days be fixed in a family quite as unalterably as its at home days.

For example :

*Mr. & Mrs. John Paul Field*

*request the pleasure*

*of . . . . . company*

*at dinner,*

*Saturday, . . . . .*

*at eight o'clock,*

*205 Philo Street.*

The following formality is preferred by many entertainers of unquestionable taste :

*Mr. & Mrs. John Paul Wright*

*request the pleasure*

*of your company*

*at dinner,*

*on Saturday, . . . . .*

*at eight o'clock,*

*205 Philo Street.*

The address upon the envelope explains who are invited.

One of the latest, as doubtless it will be one of the most approved, forms for a widower's or bachelor's dinner invitations for a season's use is engraved thus, upon a square card :



*Mr. Kenneth Lord Cotton*

*requests the pleasure*

*of . . . . . company*

*at dinner,*

*on . . . . .*

*at eight o'clock,*

*105 Temple Street.*

For bachelors who have no established homes, but entertain frequently, it is good form to order a card that may serve their hospitable intentions several times. No address is engraved upon it because sometimes it will be required for dinners for men only, at a club; sometimes at a restaurant or at a kinswoman's residence at which both men and women are bidden. Under such circumstances the place selected for the dinner is written in the lower left corner of the invitation. The host's visiting card, with his present address engraved upon it, is enclosed in the same envelope to ensure prompt replies.

## INVITATIONS TO INFORMAL DINNERS.

THOSE who already have engraved notes or cards in readiness to fill in and send out when an impromptu or informal dinner is to be given, may of course use them; but written notes are deemed far more friendly, because they express more distinctly the agreeable sentiments of a true hospitality. Such informal invitations are just as exacting in their demands for immediate responses as if they were formally engraved notes. The response must be written in the same style as the note received, that is, in the first or third person, to correspond with the request to dine.

Etiquette permits the latter to be phrased in as formal sentences as would be engraved, but the fact that it is written signifies an unceremonious dinner. Every invitation, as was mentioned, is allowed such interval between its date and the date of the dinner, as its occasion or its spirit prompts; but of course a hostess risks a failure to secure those whom she most wants to see at her table by the brevity of the notice she sends out.

## ADDRESSES UPON ENVELOPES ENCLOSING INVITATIONS.

IF a man and his wife and one daughter are invited to dine, it is proper to include them all in the space left blank for names upon notes of invitation, but only the father's and mother's names should be upon the envelope. When there is no blank for names the envelope conveys the invitation thus :

*Mr. & Mrs. Thomas Reesse Kip,*

*Miss Kip,*

*11 Hope Terrace,*

*New York.*

If a son is invited, a separate note is sent to him and he replies for himself. This distinction between sons and daughters is a recognition of the custom of chaperoning young women.

More than three persons should not be invited to a

dinner from one family. Two is the customary number selected from large households.

Fathers may ask by note that a hostess accept a son in his stead, and a mother may make a similar request for her daughter; but, unlike other entertainments, no one can ask for a card for another who has been forgotten or is omitted.

## REPLIES TO FORMAL INVITATIONS.

A FEW persons who have many social demands order cards engraved for regretfully declining, also cards or notes of cordial acceptance of dinners, balls, and other entertainments ; but such forms of friendly intercommunication are not likely to become general. We are too kindly for cool, pre-arranged refusals of proffered hospitalities, even though invitations are sometimes an impertinence. Finely bred persons do not allow themselves to be discourteous because others are intrusive and perhaps ignorant of personal or social distinction. Even to accept an invitation by an engraved, instead of a written reply, is not wholly gracious. It is too mechanical a response and lacks a suitable appreciation of a desire to bestow pleasure, even though to accept such hospitality may be at personal sacrifice.

The following answers are in good form :

*Mr. & Mrs. Thomas Reesse Kip,*

*and*

*Miss Kip,*

*accept with pleasure*

*Mr. & Mrs. John Paul Fields'*

*kind invitation to meet*

THE HONORABLE

MR. AND MRS. HENRY JAMES NORTHCOTE,

*at dinner,*

*Monday, February tenth.*

*January 20th.*

*11 Hope Terrace.*

The second invitation mentioned under "Forms of Ceremonious Invitations" is equally exacting as to the time and form of its reply, and is less ceremonious only because it has not the names of its most honored guests engraved upon it. The names must, however, be mentioned in replies in the same manner as if a separate card had not been used.

If there is the smallest doubt in the way of a full acceptance of a dinner invitation, or even a known possibility of a hindrance later on and before the dinner, no finely bred person will accept, nor will he put his hosts in an uncomfortable frame of mind by replying conditionally and leaving to them the chances of filling his place at the last moment.

Of course an occurrence at the last hour may compel an absence, but the reasons therefor—and they must be serious ones—must be communicated to the dinner giver at once.

No delicate-minded person will permit the symmetrical proportions of a ceremonious, or indeed an informal dinner, to be risked by private reasons of his own. He cannot be so unkind as to take chances for another in the hope of being able to present himself at the appointed hour. Such selfishness would be unpardonable, and its bad form cannot be too strongly emphasized.

Dinner invitations are declined or accepted within twenty-four hours. Whether declined for a known reason or for a possible one, the regret must be

sent at once to permit another guest to be substituted.

The following answer is good form :

*Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Reesse Kip regret that a previous engagement (or an illness, or a probable absence) compels them to decline Mr. and Mrs. John Paul Fields' very kind invitation to dinner on Monday, February tenth.*

*January 20.*

*11 Hope Terrace.*

The question may be asked by those who are not in very large social circles, why in declining or accepting an invitation its date should be included with its reply. To those who have a press of engagements or who give many dinners, the answer is obvious : without looking over her list Mrs. Fields may not easily recall to which one of a series of dinners Mr. and Mrs. Kip were bidden. Thus the date of a dinner as given in the invitation must be repeated in the reply. This is *de rigueur*.

The envelope in which an answer is sent must always be addressed according to the name upon the invitation. For example:—if Mrs. Fields alone extended the hospitality, her name alone may be used in replying or in directing the envelope, even though it is supposable that Mr. Fields is to receive guests with her and sit at the head of the table.



It is a matter of taste and not of etiquette to decide whether the names of both man and wife shall be upon invitations to dinner; but custom, and, perhaps it may be added, good taste, incline to the use of both.

## DINNER TOILETTES.

**MEN** always wear evening dress. Custom and good form demand it.

Handsome dress, more or less open at the throat, is always expected of women. It is a poor recognition of a hostess' effort to give pleasure by a beautifully decorated table and an attractive dinner, to dress otherwise than handsomely, and if not too elderly, in an ornamental fashion. It is the place for gems, jewels, laces, and all equally beautiful apparel. Cheerful and pretty home dress with gloves is required even at informal dinners, although extremes of elegance are not expected or desired by a hostess who is giving what she calls "a little dinner."

## PROPER TIME FOR ARRIVING AT DINNERS.

To be prompt at a dinner is a necessity. To be late even a minute, or to be more than ten minutes in advance of the dinner hour is bad form. Lateness hurts the quality of the food, angers those who are to serve it, and vexes the hostess, if she be not an angel.

Upon inquiring of a host who waited fifteen minutes for a man and wife, what he did about it, he replied :

"I waited. Had they furnished satisfactory reasons for their discourtesy to twenty persons, I should have accepted their apologies and felt sorry for them, but they didn't. I treated them with impressive friendliness during the dinner and evening ; but they have never been invited since, and I suspect they are still wondering why."

Good form provides several methods by which a man is informed whom he is to escort to table at ceremonious dinners. At an informal one, usually, the host and hostess, having arranged their expected guests in their own minds, remember how they are to

be paired, and one or the other of the hosts introduces each man to his table companion soon after his arrival, and at the same time informs him if he is to sit at the right or left of his host, which bit of instruction spares a guest the awkwardness of mistaking his place.

For large dinners a diagram of the table and its covers, with the name of each guest written in its proper place, is laid upon a table in a conspicuous place in the coat room. Of course each man acquaints himself with his location and with the name of the woman he is to take to the dining-room.

Another pleasant form directs that each man's name with that of his partner for the dinner, also, "right of host," or "left of host," be written upon a card that is placed upon a tray in the hall. The waiter who opens the door for him, offers him the tray, and by finding his own card he also learns with whom he is to sit at dinner, and on which side of the table. If he is unacquainted with his destined companion he reminds his host or hostess of this fact very soon after he has greeted them, and he is at once presented. If he has met the woman before he seeks her and informs her that he has been desired to escort her to the table. This plan relieves entertainers of so much wearying care of their guests that it has been established as strict etiquette that a man shall almost at once inquire whom he shall have the pleasure of sitting by, provided he has omitted to look at the diagram, or has

mislaid his card, or if it is a small informal affair and the host or hostess has forgotten to acquaint him with the name of his dinner companion.

There are two ways of blundering in social *et ceteras*: One is when persons are dreamy or absent-minded and forget small but essential ceremonies because they are commonplace, every-day occurrences; the other one is when persons make mistakes because they do not know the right way, or are not frequently called upon to apply what knowledge of etiquette they have and so forget.

A hostess with mental activity and a clear knowledge of established usages is never in error. If she is compelled to be severe or strict in her formalities, she is sustained and soothed by falling back upon those social laws that good society has in its wisdom enacted. As a protection she is grateful to etiquette. Consciously or unconsciously she may ask a man to escort a woman to table who is by no means his choice, nor he her preference, but good form permits no remonstrance to be made by either, and high breeding and polite usage compel the pair to treat each other with the finest courtesy, and to be as cheery and chatty as if they were on the kindest terms with each other.

## GUESTS OF HONOR.

IF the dinner is given as a mark of respect to a man or woman, or both, of course the host escorts the woman, and the hostess takes the arm of the man who is the honored guest. If there are no specially distinguished persons in the party, she who is unmistakably the eldest, or she who may be a stranger in town, or perhaps one who has never sat at meat with them, is chosen for the right hand seat next the host.

When the butler, who has a list of guests, and knows when all are in the drawing-room, opens the doors leading to the dining-room, bows to the host and says to him, "Dinner is served," the head of the house offers his left arm to the lady chosen for this mark of respect, and leads the way, and his guests, in pairs, follow him. The hostess and the man whom she has honored upon this occasion follow last, and he sits at her right hand. Others find their places easily, because location cards, each with a guest's name upon it, have been laid by every cover, according to the diagram, should there have been one; or if hall cards only have been provided, "left" or "right" upon them prevents

very much straying, and searching for places, even at large dinners.

We are said to owe to a trained toilette a continuance of the custom of offering the left arm to a woman when escorting her to a dining-room. The right arm has been at her service for all other attentions for many a year; but how is a man to protect her long gown from the feet of others, and arrange her chair at the same time, if her hand is upon this arm? In feudal times, of necessity she always clung to his left arm, and this reminder of the days of chivalry is not unpleasant to most women. Of course, there are really polished men who disallow this etiquette, or perhaps their memories fail to prompt them at the critical moment; but good form does not approve of giving the right arm to a dinner partner. The left is *de rigueur* at court.

Each guest stands at his or her place until the hostess is taking her seat, when all at once occupy their chairs, not in haste, but with quietness, or at least without hurry or the least confusion.

Each guest should contribute his or her part to the cheeriness and charm of the occasion by at least looking pleased with the table appointments and with the guests, whether at heart anything or anybody is to one's liking. Such suppression of private opinions and feelings is not in the finer sense an insincerity. It is simply a suitable acknowledgment of an extended and accepted hospitality, inspired by a wish

to recognize and express proper thanks for a kind intention.

If there is no wine, and a guest is accustomed to this luxury, he will not mention his habit of taking it. If there is wine, and he disapproves of its use, he will permit only a little of it to be poured into his glasses, and will make no comment. His private opinions or convictions can find no expression at a table where his entertainer is his opponent. If he was unaware that they differed in their convictions regarding wines, he pays the penalty of his ignorance by quietly and cheerfully ignoring its presence. If he accepts further hospitalities, he must make a settlement with his own conscience; but he has forever debarred himself from privately remonstrating with his host in the interest of wineless dinners.

If toasts are drunk—as they seldom are at private dinners, the custom having fallen very much into disuse—he must lift his glass when others do, to express his sympathy with the sentiment proposed; but good manners forbid him the liberty of noticeably refusing the offices of a wine glass, however sincerely he may disapprove of wine. Candor and courtesy do not always go easily hand in hand at dinners, or indeed elsewhere, in what is known as fashionable society.

After the last course has been served and finger bowls have been pushed aside, the hostess bows to her guests, and all rise. If the butler has remained in the



room, which some families disallow after the dinner is quite served, he opens the drawing-room door and closes it after them. If he is absent, the host, if he is nearest it, or the hostess' escort, provided he is by it, opens it, stands by until all the women pass out, and then closes it. The men gather nearer to the host for a little chat, and perhaps another glass of wine. If there is no smoking apartment, the dining-room is used for this luxury, but an absence from the drawing-room is not as long in America as it is in England or in France.

It is not good form for a man at once to join the woman who was his dinner companion, even though she be his *fiancée*. A distribution of attentions is expected after dinner.

Tea, or black coffee, is very soon brought in to be served from a table, upon which the pot, jug of cream, plate of sliced lemon, sugar-vase, cups and spoons are placed, or else the waiter bears in the same, and passes the beverage, poured out, to each guest. If tea or coffee, or both, is in pots, a young woman—not the hostess—usually proposes to sit by the table and fill the cups, and young men guests pass them to others.

If more guests have not been invited to come in after dinner, the party takes leave before eleven o'clock, either to go home or to attend dances or receptions elsewhere. Of course, each guest expresses thanks as he takes leave of his hosts, and says pleasant things in praise of the occasion, and the beauty of the dinner.

### AFTER-DINNER COURTESIES.

To call upon a hostess upon her first weekly "at home" day following a dinner invitation, whether accepted or not, is obligatory. If she has no day at home, a call must be made in person within a week. A wife or daughter may leave after-dinner cards for a husband or father, if he be elderly; but young and unmarried men should leave cards for themselves, after so exclusive a hospitality.

After-dinner calls may be brief, but they are imperative. If the hostess is engaged or out, complimentary regards for her are left with an attendant at the door.

If the invitation to dine is not accepted, this call of ceremony should be made at the earliest suitable hour, as an emphasis to regrets previously expressed in the reply to the invitation.

## PART SECOND.

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### TABLE OBSERVANCES.

#### I.

THIS paragraphic chapter is devoted to prevailing and undetermined table etiquette, the value of which each person may set for himself. Few diners at handsome tables are willing to be very much out of harmony with the usages that are habitual to their fellow guests, or their hosts. Charm of manner and polished address may be learned of the public, and from society dramas and novels, if our observant faculties are properly developed; but table refinements are either inherited with family silver or are purchased with new plate and discriminate observations.

#### II.

The *petit morale* of formalities in eating varies with the times, but their delicacies and courtesies, never.

Happily, the pleasantness and beauty of our table customs are increasing, and we are assuredly advancing toward that satisfactory height where a refined common sense shall rule us so entirely that we shall be unconscious of obeying the exactions of a formula. We shall be involuntarily correct, habit having then become second nature.

## III.

The little usages that gratify a polite society cannot be written out under any other fitting titles than "Pretty Customs" or "Prevailing Table Graces." To know what these usages are and to practice them, is as much a social obligation as the wearing of a fashionable rather than an unfashionable gown to a dinner, even though one be as handsome a toilette as the other. Of course the hostess, as well as the guest, prefers to appear in a modern gown.

## IV.

First, of all things, decline nothing. If you do not like certain foods it is a courtesy to your hostess to appear as if you did. If the dinner is served from the side, *à la Russe*, you can take as little upon your plate as you choose, and you can appear as if eating it, for there is always your bread to taste, and your fork or spoon to trifle with and thus conceal your unwillingness to partake of a disliked course. If the dinner is

served by the host, a concealment of distaste is equally easy by using a little skill and tact in manner and conversation.

## V.

Never ask for another helping when there are several courses, and for soup not at all. It delays the progress of the dinner unpleasantly, and announces a discreditable devotion to appetite.

## VI.

To take soup with a noise, or indeed to make a needless sound with the mouth while eating or drinking anything, is unrefined. To be candid, it is vulgar.

## VII.

Dip the spoon *from* you in the plate to take up soup. Drink it from the side next you and not from the tip of the spoon, even though a mustache should be in the way.

## VIII.

Fish is eaten with an ordinary fork, with as much dexterity in the evasion of bones as can be commanded with such an inadequate instrument, and a bit of bread as aid. A little modern fish-knife, with an ingenious fork, is now in attendance upon fish, and many difficulties with small bones are more easily overcome.

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To prolong a sitting at table being one of the purposes of a modern entertainer, it is good form to be reasonably deliberate with the fish course, as indeed it is with every replacement of a viand, and thereby one expresses a "prevailing elegance."

## IX.

Most food is eaten with a fork, the knife being only its preparer, except when cheese that is neither grated nor creamy is partaken of as an ever-respected part of a dessert. Here it is that knives retain their grip on ancient custom and bring it down to modern tables. Cheese is eaten with a knife.

## X.

Forks are laid for such desserts as are not wholly liquid, these instruments being used to sop broken bits of pudding in its sauce, thus banishing the spoon whenever possible. Ice-creams are eaten with forks, but water ices with spoons, and good form does not tell us why. Its commands are not often thus arbitrary. Strawberries are eaten with forks unless their leafy tips have a stem, in which case it is proper and graceful to take each with the fingers, touch it to the sugar lying upon one's plate, then half dip it in cream and place it to the mouth. The same service of sugar and cream is performed by a fork when strawberries are not served with their stems.

## XI.

Forks are used with the right hand and are pointed toward the mouth no more directly than is necessary to put food between the lips.

## XII.

Spoons with tea, coffee, chocolate and bouillon remain in the saucer when not conveying liquid to the mouth. They are correctly placed at the right of the cup whenever not in use.

## XIII.

In England it is a prevailing custom, and the same is becoming a pretty convenience here, to place the spoon in the saucer at the right of the cup when no more tea is required, and upon its left when more is desired. Trained attendants at table are alert for this signal, and so also are helpful young persons at five o'clock teas. No words are necessary.

## XIV.

Lay your knife and fork parallel with each other and obliquely across a plate that is to be removed for the coming of another course. To forget this increases noise when an attendant is gathering them together.

## XV.

Do not pass to another a plate that has been sent to you by a host or hostess, because it disturbs the plan

of your entertainer. It is silently taking an exception to his sense of fitness or courtesy and substituting your own in its stead. Of course this applies only when competent service is at hand. In its absence, with the approval of a host, to aid at table is obligatory.

## XVI.

If olives are served with tongs, or a spoon, or fork, use the same to lift the fruit to your plate, but eat it with your fingers. If there are no spoons, tongs, or forks, with which to serve yourself, take the olives with your fingers and not with your own fork or spoon. Do the same with cut sugar.

## XVII.

Never bite off a piece from your dinner bread. Do not cut the bread served you at any time. If it is to be buttered, take a small bit, not more than two mouthfuls, and spread it. A slice of buttered bread is much too suggestive of the nursery to please fastidious fellow guests.

All warm bread should be torn apart, or broken, and never cut. If it is served in large pieces break it for your neighbor also.

## XVIII.

Corn may be eaten from the cob. Etiquette permits this method, but does not allow one to butter



the entire length of an ear of corn and then gnaw it from end to end. To hold an ear of corn, if it be a short one, by the end, with the right hand, and bite from the ear is good form. A little doily, or very small napkin, is sometimes served with corn to fold about the end of a cob that is to be grasped by the hand, but this arrangement is as inconvenient as it is unnecessary. Good form disallows it.

## XIX.

It is in bad taste to lay a napkin over the breast. At elegant tables the napkin is only partly shaken from its folds, and is then dropped in the lap to use for wiping the lips and fingers. It is supposed that those who have refined table manners do not scatter crumbs or drop food.

## XX.

An attempt has been made to introduce the wearing of gloves at table. This plan is too absurd an innovation, and will never become a custom. Gloves are worn to the table by women, always, and a few men prefer to wear them; but they are removed by both men and women as soon as they are seated.

## XXI.

If an accident happens at table, if a glass is overturned or a bit of china broken, apologize at some other time than at table. To say you are sorry is

enough at the moment. A hostess with tact will relieve the embarrassment of an unfortunate guest by a smile, or a witty remark, which is sure to win profound gratitude. A man of distinguished attainments and great timidity in society, was a well known teetotaler. He was finely bred, and when wine was being passed paid no heed to the service. On one occasion he was painfully embarrassed by overturning a glass of wine at the beginning of a handsome dinner. His host made himself famous by the kindly wit with which he restored tranquillity to his troubled guest. Said he: "My friend has conferred upon me a distinguished and unprecedented honor. He has emptied his wine glass at my table." Could anything be finer in breeding or humor than that!

## XXII.

Much has been said about the various methods of eating asparagus, and the preponderance of opinion and practice inclines toward lifting it with one's fingers by its cut end, when it is not dressed with a white sauce. With a creamy dressing it is usually eaten with a fork, although when such a preparation is served upon the plate and not upon the vegetable, many fastidious persons still prefer to lift its cut end in the fingers, dip its top in the sauce, and convey it to the mouth. Where there are differences of opinion, liberty has its opportunities within the limits of delicacy.

## XXIII.

French artichokes that are provided with a white sauce are broken leaf by leaf—if the layers may be called leaves—and their edible ends are dipped with the fingers into the sauce and then bitten off. The French woman takes this occasion to display her beautifully cut and highly polished finger tips, also the sparkle of finger-rings upon pretty hands.

## XXIV.

Lettuce, when served without dressing, is pulled to pieces with the fingers, or delicately rolled and bitten off after touching the salt. A slice of lemon laid upon, or beside, fish or croquette, is folded once by the fingers and squeezed upon the food. This is correct, though some persons also press the slice with a fork to drain its juice upon the plate and then dip each mouthful of fish in it.

## XXV.

Water-cress is always eaten with the fingers, even though a French dressing has been poured over it.

## XXVI.

Many have been the discussions, but never has a universal conclusion been reached as to the question, "Who ought to be first served at a private dinner?"

Of course when two attendants bear table trays of

the same food about a dinner, one of them first offers what he has to the woman who sits at the right of the host, while the other one is presenting his tray to the hostess at the other end of the table. If there is but one bearer of meats, a hostess prefers that her most honored guest at table, she who is at the right of the host, should be first served, and certainly her desire should be respected. This ought to settle it, and good form declares that it does.

## XXVII.

In households where servants wear no livery, good form has issued no strict commands regarding dress. A caterer's men wear black dress suits with white, washable gloves and ties, and sometimes white vests; but private domestics do not like to be arrayed in the same manner as those whom they somewhat contemptuously call "casuals." It is likely that in the near future the butler's suit, when not a livery, will be a black frock coat closed high in clerical fashion, with metal buttons, and a white tie, and the usual white napkin laid over the hand he uses to serve the table. His subalterns will be arrayed in short, black, round coats, also closed high, with metal buttons. Each will wear a white tie, and each will have the right hand covered with a napkin that is changed as often as it is rumpled or soiled. Certainly a distinctive dress, when in attendance, is a convenience, and sometimes it is a necessity. White duck coats are already much

approved at country houses in summer, and there are many reasons to believe that such dress will become an established custom with family servants.

## XXVIII.

It is a safe rule to use the fork whenever one is uncertain how he should partake of vegetables, and indeed, of most foods that are unfamiliar.

## XXIX.

If one is much perplexed with a strange viand, a little waiting and observant attention to others will do no harm. A glance toward host or hostess is usually edifying and assuring. A professional diner-out, who is exceptionally gallant, always treats his food exactly as his hostess does hers. He claims that this is good manners, and he is not without justification; but as he confesses to performing some droll table antics with knife and spoon by following with fidelity the examples set him, one cannot but wonder if he would not be more useful to his entertainers if he sometimes provided them with more graceful object lessons than they have as yet been permitted to see in their upward social progress.

## PART THIRD.

### THE TABLE.

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#### ARRANGING A MENU.

OF habitual dinner givers there are two contrasting, but equally fashionable parties, and one may affiliate with or follow either and still be within the limits, even if only at the outer edge, of good form. Conviction rather than generosity, or the want of it, guides and controls each one, because the frequent entertainer cannot be very much influenced by money considerations. One spreads a table that is said to groan with its lavishness. Though this may not be strictly true of the table it is too frequently of those who sit by it.

This entertainer pronounces his banquet an expression of unselfishness. The opposite style of host calls such bounty "vulgar ostentation." The latter offers his guests a table laden with what he consid-

ers a refined sufficiency, but his rival speaks of his *menu* as a "pretentious parsimony," and an "egotistic and insincere economy."

Parallel with these two, and midway between them, is an elegant hospitality that touches the highest sense of refinement, and gratifies, even satisfies, its partakers because it expresses a delicate respect for the cultured appetites and physical well-being of friends. To those unfamiliar with its skilfully selected and perfectly presented *menus*, it has an impressively combined beauty and excellence that is standard only in fortunate households where intelligence and fine breeding are marked characteristics. Of course the entertainments of such do not lack substantial foods that nourish and maintain physical vigor, nor yet those dainty products that amuse the palate and please the eye.

"A too great variety of dishes dulls the appetite, confuses the taste and creates alien and unfriendly chemicals during digestive processes," said one of the most successful dinner givers in America—a poetic and artistic *gourmet*, who is so respectful to his own gastric functions that he has not been ill an hour since he gave intelligent and conscientious attention to the combinations as well as the qualities of his foods.

Of course the season, and geographical limitations must needs influence a *menu*. When one is living where all the earth contributes to the larder at once, as in New York, a vigilant restraint upon one's fancy

when planning for a dinner, rather than a free rein, proves the refinement of an entertainer. Lavishness tends to grossness, and it is no compliment to be bidden to share it.

A few social leaders to whom more or less expenditure is of small consequence, have reduced their most ceremonious dinners to six and seven courses, of course with various *hors-d'œuvres* within reach of each guest, these appetizers serving to fill in the time between courses, which pauses are lengthened as the numbers of dishes are lessened. Guests trifle with salted nuts, hearts of celery, olives, etc., as well as with the wit of each other during dinner serving, and the brilliancy of conversation is increased delightfully, and no one feels sleepy after returning to the drawing-room.

Even the time-honored prelude to soup is much lessened in quantity. If it be oysters or Little Neck clams, four is the approved number. If broiled sardines, one small fish or half a large one, only, is laid upon the first plate. If it be *caviare* or *pâté* it is on slips of brown or white bread, and three small mouthfuls, each one heaped at its center, is the limit for such overtures to a fine dinner.

Soup, usually a clear one; fish with *pâté* or with one vegetable, which may be dressed cucumbers, or crisp, fried potatoes; a roast with not more than two vegetables, and usually with but one; a Roman punch or other sherbet; and game, with a salad, bring one



to dessert, preceded by cheese and wafers, if one likes ; and lastly, fruits and coffee.

It is fashionable to serve a different wine with each course, but it is equally good form to offer but two, or perhaps one. It is also elegant, even distinguished and delicate, to provide none at all, since many of our finest and noblest men and women are striving to find the springs of human misery and check their overflow, and such persons more than suspect stimulants to be one of these springs.

It is decidedly vulgar to offer several wines that are less than the best, one excellent brand being sure of recognition and appreciation by *connoisseurs*, who detest inferior vintages. Wines and *liqueurs* of poor quality are said to be responsible for the wrong-going of many a man. A host who is as famous for his fastidiousness in the quality of the wines he offers his guests as in the temperature at which they are served, requires sherry to be at 60°, when poured from its bottle ; clarets from 65° to 70° ; finer red wines at not less than 75° Fahrenheit. Champagne is served at his table on the verge of freezing, if not *frappé*.

Apollinaris, clysmic or other mineral or aerated waters, are usually served with wines, and are served at many dinners where wine is not.

There are especial tastes which demand departures from established customs, and there are entertainers who have the courage to be independent. These are they who establish new and agreeable usages, at first

with opposition, but afterward with the result that they are pronounced reformers, and establishers of good form. Such are they who arrange the order of pouring their wines according to their individual sense of fitness. For those who have limited experience in dinner-giving with wines, the following order is a safe one and that in general use :

Sauterne or hock is served with raw oysters ; sherry or Madeira with soup and fish ; champagne with roasts ; claret with game ; Amontillado sherry, port, Tokay, Malaga or Muscatel with the dessert, and green Chartreuse, Maraschino or Vermouth *liqueur* after black coffee that is served in the dining-room. If women leave the table and coffee is served to them in the drawing-room, *liqueurs* are left to the smokers and are seldom or never carried elsewhere. Nor is it the best form for women to drink them at any time. Indeed few women take more than two kinds of wine when they drink it at all, and many drink no wine whatever.

For dinners of six or seven courses no *menu* is likely to be placed upon a dinner table. It is more and more a refined custom to leave this programme of the cook's performance to restaurants and hotels, as there is no good reason for it at private tables. Few care to keep reminders of especial dinners, with weeks of discomfort following after.

## LAYING THE TABLE.

LAVISH entertainers, and not a few artistic ones, appear to have lost their respect for traditional, fine, snowy, family linen. Those who can afford to please their capricious eyes now and then spread their table for a ceremonious dinner with silk, and overlay it with a handsome lace cover, or one of hand *coupé*. In this case the floral decorations should be in harmony with the color that glints through.

This luxury, however, is no part of good form in dinners and is only mentioned as incidental to our present era of luxury.

The handsomest linens at this moment are unfigured and are woven like plain satins with borders of arabesques, bands, key patterns, etc., in damask. Nothing can be more beautiful and refined than this plain centre, covering the entire table. A lace or hand-wrought, silk scarf laid through the centre of a linen-covered table, either crosswise or lengthwise, is still in favor. Sometimes two scarfs cross each other, in which case they need not be of the same color if two hues in flowers are to be upon them. However,

those who order whatever they desire, and have it for the wishing, are returning to the finest white linens, upon which silver, cut glass, and fine white china with edges in gold, or only gilded handles, glow and glisten at fine dinners. To an excess of painted porcelains, each course having had a different color or character of ware, we owe a present strong reaction in taste. However, family china will retain its warm place in the hearts of entertainers, and a patronage of new, fine, white, table service will act only as an equalizer of enthusiasms that had become riotous in color. It is the present fashion to use silver or glass, or both, for *hors-d'œuvres* and *bonbons*. Champagne jugs and carafes are of cut glass, and candelabra or tall banqueting lamps are of glass. A high glass for a single blossom, or a low one for a cluster of violets, is not infrequently set before each cover, and at a few recent dinners, a cut glass candlestick with a shaded candle has been set before each guest, but this plan will never become general, because no hostess is likely to study the complexion of each guest and give to her a shade that will illuminate her especial beauty, and a variety of shades is not improving to a banqueting table. Prismatic lights from cut glass exhibit the elegance of the table itself as no other high lights do.

Low banks or mounds of flowers, with or without foliage, and candle or lamp shades to match them, illuminate with artistic charm a table laid with cut glass, silver, white china, and immaculate linen.

Therefore those who are establishing a home, need never be uncertain about the proper style of table appointments. Fashion is sure to come around to white china at intervals more or less brief, and it is not only always beautiful and acceptable, but it may be supplemented after breakages, while erasements of its gilding may be restored.

In setting a table there is an almost permanent formula, though an effort has been made by an innovating few to establish the custom at dinners *à la Russe*, of serving upon or with each plate, the silver that should next be used; thus arranging that only an oyster fork and soup spoon be placed at the right of each cover when the table is laid.

At many dinners the oyster or appetizer fork is laid across whatever is first served.

Dinner breads, either in single rolls, or in blocks of bread cut from the loaf, are each laid upon a very small, ornamental plate, at the left of each cover. It is a matter for personal preference to determine, whether a napkin folded square shall be laid across this bread or beneath it, or shall be again folded and placed back of the cover and close to it. Ornamental foldings of this actually practical bit of linen, are left to restaurants and hotels.

It is good form when laying the table, to place at the right of the plate, and next it, a soup spoon, a fish knife or fish fork that has a blade upon one edge, a meat knife—and if the dinner requires it, another

smaller spoon, which shall be the centre article in this group of silver.

At the left of the cover is a fish fork, provided one with a blade is not at the right; next this fork is one for meat, then a game fork, and then one for the dessert, if a spoon is not set for it. Whatever other silver the various courses require is brought in with them. Upon the little bread plates, sometimes is placed a small knife to be used with either butter or cheese, provided the *menu* includes them. Fruit knives are brought on the plates, which are usually of colored or white glass, according to the hue or hues of the finger bowls that are set upon them. There is a difference of opinion, therefore a freedom, in placing the doily. One leader in tasteful dinner-serving places this bit of lace, or mull, or of hand-wrought, painted or etched linen, between the glass plate and the fine china, the latter being for the dessert; while a rival exhibits her artistic doilies by laying them between the finger bowl and her transparent fruit plate.

Of course such fragile fabrics as those of which the present doilies are made, are strictly ornamental, the dinner napkin doing that duty which fell to the doily when it was only a fruit napkin.

If dessert plates are finely glazed, or are richly ornamented by gilding or colors, the decorative doily can afford to be used to prevent those defacements which cut glass cannot avoid leaving upon fine artistic porcelains, if often placed directly upon them.

Champagne jugs of fine, white glass are a part of table decorations wherever wines are served. Sometimes they are set empty in silver casters—provided the latter are family silver—and are removed only long enough to receive freshly uncorked, sparkling wines, and then are returned at once to their places of prominence, after the champagne glasses have been filled from them.

There appears to be less eagerness than formerly to drink champagne with its froth ruffling up over the lips and perhaps whitening carefully kept mustaches.

One who keeps to traditional customs, insists that it is the handsome, cut-glass champagne jug that has deprived guests of the music of popping corks and high froth, and perhaps it is. Cork announcements are at present less often made in the dining room where one is able to hear them.

A few dinner-givers still insist upon pouring each wine from its own bottle, on the plea that the finest and most subtle part of its bouquet is lost by decanting. They may be right, but it is silently suspected by their guests that such persons fear somebody will fail to recognize the antiquity of the labels of the several rare vintages that are provided, if original bottles are not *en evidence*.

The same hosts are also usually unwilling to serve their wines in any but fine, white, plain glasses, that the colors of their choice brands may be properly

noticed and admired ; but then such entertainers are not always of those who establish and maintain good form in dinner-giving.

Upon tables that have returned to cut glass carafes, jugs and bowls, to silver, and to white, gold-tipped Haviland china, it is still by no means bad form to serve wines in Bohemian glasses. If a purchase is to be made, white, cut, wine glasses are preferred. Their shapes are a matter for personal preference to settle. Unalterable good form long ago decided how much wine they might contain, so that the tall, slender glass must hold just as much as the low, wide one, but no more.

Tiny *liqueur* glasses are oftener than not ornamental in decoration or in solid color, because being so small, if white, they are sometimes inadvertently overturned.

*Bonbons* are served with tongs of silver, or with gilded or enamelled ones, although these little instruments have given place to fingers when lumps of sugar are required. The tongs are laid across ornamental sweets that are arranged upon attractive plates of glass, china, or silver, or in trays of burnished metal. Fancifully shaped spoons, antique, or reproductions of ancient silver, are used to serve salted nuts, or olives, unless the latter have little tongs laid upon them, to lift them to one's plate. Silver harpoons, once inseparable from olives, are no longer in fashion. They were discarded because, though highly deco-



rative, they seldom or never served the purpose for which they were intended.

If an appetizer precedes the dinner, it is, if shell fish, served upon dishes made for this purpose, though other and smaller plates are preferred for broiled sardines, for *caviare*, or spiced *pâté* on bits of brown bread or toast. These little plates are each set upon one already in place waiting for it, before the party comes to the dining-room.

This brief course ended, its plates are removed and the soup, which is next, is also set upon the waiting plates. If an *entrée* of fish in cups is next served, the cups are set upon smaller plates, the latter also being placed upon the larger ones already upon the table. If the fish is in cutlets, or is broiled or baked, it is passed upon its platter, for self-helping to hot plates that displace the cold ones which received the preceding dishes. Its sauce, if not served upon it, with one vegetable, is passed at once from a side table. There is no further use for the cold, waiting plates in front of each person, nor has there been, at any time, except perhaps as a protection to the cloth while the smaller plates were passed with foods upon them.

If the roast is carved in the butler's pantry, at a side table, or by the host, it is good form to pass the platter to give each person a choice of parts. It is not disapproved by good form for a carver, at large dinners, to portion out the roast upon hot plates and place his own selection before each guest. If his

choice is not the piece preferred, there are still other dishes to follow, and no one need feel anxious lest he shall go hungry from the table. Due courtesy compels at least a pretence of eating undesired portions.

Vegetables, not more than two, and usually one, are passed to each guest from a side table as soon as the roast is helped, and he serves himself a required quantity. Such habitual accompaniments of meats are never placed upon dinner tables, no matter how informal the entertainment, nor indeed upon well appointed tables at any time, because, however attractive they may appear while unbroken, they are not handsome after one or two helpings leave them in broken, disorderly forms.

Housewives who are proud of the colors and shapes of their jellies to be eaten with meats, not infrequently put them on glass dishes or in attractive bowls, and so arrange them on elegant dinner tables that precious jelly spoons shall have a chance to be duly admired. As soon, however, as jellies have been passed (with the roast, if there is salad with the game), they are placed upon a side table or in the butler's pantry, because they are no longer ornamental.

Sherbets are brought on in little glasses after a roast. Perhaps they are in fanciful china cups, each set upon a little plate with a tiny spoon by the side of it. Sometimes sherbet cups have little plates *en suite*. When sherbet is frozen in ornamental forms, one form is laid upon a dessert plate with a larger spoon.

Game, if carved by the butler or by the host, is passed upon its platter, that each person may choose his favorite part; the salad follows at once, and is also self-helped to a cold, small, round, or crescent-shaped dish set at the left of, and close to, the hot one. This crescent is called a bone dish in America and, until recently, has been used for the small purpose that its name suggests, while its actual reason for being is, that cold and hot food may be eaten at the same time without injury to the flavor of either. Crescents, if of fine quality and pretty color, are as ornamental as they are convenient.

Grated cheese, served with celery, or Rocquefort or other cheese accompanied by hot, toasted, and perhaps buttered, wafers, or cheese fingers, is offered at many American, and at all English, dinners just before the dessert, whether the latter is hot or cold.

Fruit follows, and then come coffee or tea, or both, in the dining-room or drawing-room, preferably in the latter; as it is more stirring and provocative of general sociability. This leaves smokers to their enjoyment, and prolongs the entertainment. Sometimes tea is served to women before men come in for coffee, and the latter is enjoyed by both if desired. Whether the tea or coffee is carried from the butler's pantry and passed by him to the guests, or is passed by a young woman at a small table in the drawing-room, it is a welcome diversion to men to stand or move about with cups in hand; and it is equally agreeable to women to

receive general and voluntary, rather than special, pre-arranged attention, as when seated at a formal dinner.

Music, cards, or conversation, occupies the evening, and by eleven o'clock everybody has said "good night," and has said besides those pleasant things which come so easily to one's lips after an agreeable dinner.

If there is an after-dinner reception there may be dancing; but this is not continued beyond one o'clock, and light refreshments are served from the *buffet* in the intervals of the waltz or *cotillon*.

## PROVIDING FOR A DINNER.

To the cook is given a *menu* legibly written out in full, to which is appended the number of expected guests. If this person is competent, the hostess breathes easily. If it is an experimental dinner her peace of mind is an uncertain quantity, provided she be a care-taking housekeeper, or especially fastidious regarding her table supplies, their preparation, and the appointments of a formal dinner. In some families the cook, and in others the butler, while in not a few well-ordered households, the mistress, looks after the marketing. Now and then the master of a fine establishment, in a knowing frame of mind, contracts at the grand markets for viands to be served at a company dinner.

One of the most famous of *gourmets*, with a world-wide reputation as a wit and as a perfect entertainer, went daily to market with a serving man. He wore what he called his "market coat," passed out the alley gate, returned the same way, then changed his outer raiment, and went to his fine library, or to ride or drive. He seldom dined alone; he knew that the materials

for his dinner were satisfactory and he could trust his cook for the rest. He maintained that this person, having so undoubted a proof of his master's intelligent interest in foods, was more likely to respect and maintain their excellence. Of course, all men have not the leisure of this bachelor of taste and fortune, but somebody in the house should take a personal interest in marketing, for at least part of the time. It is good form to be practically interested in food for one's own table.

Before a dinner, whoever usually markets, supplies the mistress or housekeeper with a list of seasonable luxuries, and upon this information the *menu* is determined. Different modes of cooking and serving the same articles are discussed and some one is selected, the butler being one of those at the conference. He has a copy of the *menu*, which he pins up in his pantry.

The linen or other table napery is given to him, and the wines are provided from the cellar on the morning of the dinner day. The glass and silver are in glistening array, the flowers have been ordered, and if there be a footman, he is instructed in his part of the serving. If there is no footman, the parlor maid or chamber maid receives instructions.

## SERVICE IN AND OUT OF THE DINING- ROOM AT COMPANY DINNERS.

At large dinners cooked at home and served by one's own men and maids, it is understood, because arranged for at the time of engaging them, that each one is to be on call for any reasonable aid that may be desired during special entertainments.

If there is a housekeeper, she always remains in the butler's pantry during a company dinner, as a communicator between cook and waiters, to call up courses at the proper moment, and in an orderly manner, so that there shall be no delays nor lack of smoothness in the culinary machinery. Sometimes an upper housemaid is this medium of intercommunication. Thus the reputation of the cook, which the ordering of dishes two minutes too soon or too late, might spoil, is preserved, and perfection is ensured for the dinner. A lady's maid is in the robing room, and in large establishments a groom of the chambers, a valet, or a footman, waits in the coat-room with brush in hand, ready to give any help that is desired. The latter official descends to the dining-room to be in

readiness for his part in serving the dinner, as soon as the latest man guest has gone to the drawing-room.

Householders who have few attendants—perhaps but two maids, and sometimes but one—are unwilling to allow the difference between a simple and an elaborate establishment to deter them from the pleasures of hospitality; and it is around the tables of such that those who are burdened with riches, and have not courage to expend them except as the public decides, find their greatest delight, and not infrequently their most satisfactory dinners. Warmed and illuminated by a fine, quick, human sympathy, and by an appreciation of charming people, they partake of simple, refined foods with the deepest satisfaction.

Such entertainments may have a *menu* of oysters or clams on half shells, soup, fish, a roast with one vegetable, salad with French dressing (that may or may not be mixed by the host or hostess at table), or with mayonnaise, dessert, fruit and coffee, and cheese if desired.

The hostess gracefully dips out the soup, the host carves with skill, and also serves the dessert. Vegetables are passed from the side table, as is the salad, if it be a mayonnaise.

Relishes and *bonbons* are arranged upon the table in ornamental dishes, within reach of the guests, perhaps a little mutual aid among them being necessary, an attention that is not only a most agreeable social



custom, but is strict etiquette with several most gracious European nations.

Tea should, if possible, be brewed at table, and if one has a coffee distiller that is presentable, the making of coffee is also an interesting process, and its aroma is most enjoyable.

Of course, at the most elaborate dinners, coffee and tea may be served in the drawing-room, but with few attendants. Good form does not disapprove of its service before women leave the table to afford men the bliss of smoking.

To prepare a simple company dinner should be no difficult matter, because the largest part of its preparation may, and indeed should, be completed the day before it is served. Soup, croquettes of lobster or chicken, timbales, potato chips to accompany fish, when cucumbers are difficult to get in mid-winter, also mayonnaise if French salad dressing is not preferred, should always be completed the day before a dinner party. Many of the most delicious cold desserts are necessarily compounded the day preceding their use.

Informal dinner-giving is easy to many families of refined intelligence and good taste, and these dinners are the most enjoyable and wholly satisfactory of friendly interchanges of hospitality. Here social graces find exercise, brilliant conversation is heard, wit and wisdom are freely poured out. There are places where wealth abounds, where these are not, and many rich people are eager to share them, even though

they fail to find a valet in the coat room, or a maid in waiting to remove wraps, or to fasten corsage bouquets and spread trains, when they arrive. At such dinners not more than two wines, oftener one, and still more frequently none at all, are served; but the cheer, refinement, high thinking, and brilliant wit, are more enlivening and stimulating than choice vintages.

Good form is recognizable wherever a dinner is the best of its kind and is served in a quiet and orderly manner. The graces of fine breeding beautify simplicity, and dull must be the brains, coarse the fibres, and gross the appetites of such as are not charmed with a hospitality that is in harmony with the fortunes of cultivated entertainers, whatever the limitations of their purses.

Since formal dinners are usually served *à la Russe*, which means that the carving, and sometimes the portioning, is done in the butler's pantry, or as it is called, "from the side," hosts and hostesses have little else to do, or to think about, except to lure brilliancy from their guests, and thus to place each one in an agreeable mental attitude. By the same kindly skill they may deftly cover the intellectual blemishes or immaturities of any one at table who is afflicted by such defects. Such courtesies are always duly appreciated, in a wordless way, by refined persons. No entertainer can, if she would, avoid now and then having at her table one or two who need tender consideration. In all circles of society there are those who are "unequally yoked" in

wedlock. At dinners, and indeed in all hospitalities, the married must be bidden in pairs, or omitted altogether, and entertainers free from the cares of serving, have opportunities for concealing unpleasant mental differences by maintaining safe keynotes in conversations in which less brilliant folk are included. No wise host is unmindful of his own popularity as an entertainer, and the kind one is never inconsiderate of such as "do not know that they do not know."

Carving and serving from the pantry requires intelligent and trained service. It is not long since one could truly say that it was a Spartan woman alone who could sit at the head of her table at a dinner party, converse upon topics of the times, wear a tranquil expression, and maintain a voice in which there was not a tremor of anxiety. Since trained servants are a *genus* no longer uncommon in America, the hostess, now, need have little or nothing to ruffle her emotions regarding the quality or service of her dinner.

A gentlewoman from a remote town, who still suffered the complex anxieties of a caterer and server whenever she entertained formally, recently sat at a perfectly appointed dinner table in New York, where the repast was brought to table by culinary martinets after a *chef* had delivered it, in perfection, into their hands.

She afterward said of it: "I was nearly angry with the hostess because she sat among her guests as if she were a queen giving gracious audience. One might

easily have supposed that the dinner was given solely in her honor, so wholly without apparent interest was she in its quality or its service, which I must admit was excellent, indeed perfect. It is no wonder that statistics can tell us that feminine longevity has increased twenty-five per cent. in a quarter of a century, and that at this moment 'women are belles at seventy! Still it is difficult for one who has missed all that this means, because she has lived remote from radiating sources of the best things, and is still unfamiliar with royal roads to ceremonious hospitalities, not to wish for at least one little touch of interest that is not quite anxiety, in the eyes or manners of madame the hostess, while she is presiding at her own table, spread for her friends; and yet I am quite sure ours cared for the happiness of all of us. She called out my very best story, and I no longer felt as if I were a nobody among delightful individual personages."

This guest, unfamiliar with modern usages, recognized the springs of success, and, in a *naïve*, half pathetic way, made a complaint, which in the finest sense, was a compliment to the organizing talents of her hostess.

To make others happy is the motive of table entertainers; unless they are of those who give dinners merely to cancel society obligations or to meet its expectations, or possibly, to compel recognition from those whom they invite.

With a trustworthy cook, an equally satisfactory

dining-room service, and pleasant friends, why should there be anxieties for that mistress whose brain devised the *menu* and set all the needful machinery going for the production of an artistic dinner?

Like a general, she has carefully planned a little campaign, and maintains drilled soldiers under distinct orders. If her subalterns are untrustworthy, like a wise general, she will abandon her project. If cooks and waiters are not wholly capable, and her own head and hands are insufficient to supply or to supplement their deficiencies, or if the forces of her will cannot compel perfect service, she would better postpone any but informal hospitalities until she is completely mistress of the necessary elements of success.

Rehearsals are often as necessary for dinner serving as for oratorios, provided others than skilled persons have such ceremonies well in hand. A house mistress, with mental and moral forces over which she is a self-contained ruler, may train her domestics to do their parts perfectly, if she is willing to give needful time and attention to schooling raw, or very nearly raw material. If she will, she can do this in so alluring and reassuring a way as to rouse and maintain an enthusiasm for skilled cooking and satisfactory table waiting,—but not in one lesson.

"It cannot be done at all," said a feminine pessimist.

"Have you tried?"

"No, but I am certain it cannot."

"Then you are poorly fitted to judge of the probability, or possibility, of success."

If the kitchen is beneath the dining-room, and the dinner has many courses, a person, perhaps a maid, should be stationed at the dumb-waiter to call things up by speaking through the tube, and to remove them to the butler's table. She receives dishes that are to be sent down, such as platters, and plates that may be again required. If the china is delicate the parlor maid usually has the care of it on great occasions and while the butler is occupied. After the dinner is over he takes it in charge again, clean, from the maid's hands, she having washed it below with the greatest tenderness and care.

When there is a full corps of servants the butler stands behind the host or the hostess according to the position he or she occupies in relation to the door through which foods are brought. He is nearest the door. He turns the wine in its order, passes relishes that are on the table, and by a nod or pantomime of his own code, he signals waiters who have failed to notice a need or an omission. If there is but one other waiter, or perhaps none but himself, if dexterous, he may serve eight guests easily. A very skilful butler, at tables where conversation is absorbing, often serves without the pauses caused by the removal of dishes and the bringing in of meats that he has deftly carved, being noticed as unceremoniously long. When there is but one to wait, the vegetables, sauces,

and other dishes not upon the dinner table, are placed upon a butler's table at the side for greater convenience, and the saving of time. This table, if with two under shelves below its top, is most helpful by its nearness, and skilled hands make little or no noise in table changes. Of course this table, above and below, is always overlaid with white linen, thus adding to its fitness and lessening the chances of sound when dishes are set upon it.

The servant who brings portioned food removes a plate at the same time, provided there is but one waiter. If more than one, the first takes away the plate with knife and fork laid parallel across it, and another waiter sets down two plates, each with a knife, fork and spoon upon it, provided the next food to be offered requires them, and provided there are so many courses that enough silver for each person could not conveniently be laid upon the table before guests were seated. If the food is already portioned out, the last-mentioned plates have it laid upon them. If it is to be self-helped, the waiter offers a meat platter with one hand and a vegetable or sauce with the other. He presents the platter first to the woman who came in with the host. If two waiters are serving, the other offers similar dishes to the hostess, each servant passing to the right, and thus waiting upon the host last.

At elaborate dinners two soups are provided, and a choice is offered by the waiter, who brings a plate of

each kind at the same time. One or two *entrées* are passed together for selection and self-help before the roast. Sometimes they also precede and follow a rum sherbet, or there are two sherbets with *entrées* between; but such *menus* are excessive and generally pronounced inelegant.

At correct dinners sherbet is always served just before birds. It is not forbidden to place game before a roast. Formerly it was the custom, but since a liking for salad with feathered foods is almost universal, such combined luxuries are placed farther on in the dinner, and usually next the dessert, or at least next the cheese.

Many skilled cooks are so proud of their made dishes that dinner-givers who would willingly omit all but one or two *entrées* from their *menus*, yield their own preferences for the sake of pleasing their *chefs*. For excellent and artistic formulas for made dishes one can do no better than consult one of the series of little hand-books by Thomas J. Murrey. It is called "The Book of Entrées," and furnishes receipts for nearly a hundred dishes, varying in richness and expense from terrapin to mutton curry, and from stuffed French artichokes to stuffed tomatoes.

If there are eight or twelve at table, the host and hostess cannot sit opposite each other unless pairs are separated or the guest honored by the hostess sits at the host's left. A caprice that is sometimes followed is for host and first lady, and hostess with whomsoever



she asks to escort her to table, to sit opposite each other at the ends of long tables, when they are not at the sides.

Round tables and service *à la Russe* are in use just now.

"The placing of guests is more difficult," said an experienced hostess, "than the choosing of materials for a dinner, because it is impossible to cast the responsibility of it upon any one, or even to ask for aid from the most skilful of butlers."

The traditional wisdom of the serpent and the dove's harmlessness is hers who wholly satisfies either herself, or each one of her guests. Like justice, she should be blind to everything but a proper social balance.

When the dinner is eaten and finger bowls have fulfilled their mission, it is customary, where there are few attendants, or where there is but one, for the host or the hostess' escort, whichever is nearest it, to open the door and stand by it while the women pass out, even though the men, as they sometimes do, follow them at once. It is not good form to return to the drawing-room in pairs, a break being courtesy to other guests, and sometimes a welcome change to such as may not have been wholly gratified with their entertainer's choice of dinner partners for them. Not unfrequently an obligation to be agreeable to a person to whom prejudice has been unjust proves to be as kind as it is wise.

Dinners ought to create the kindest sentiments,

and serve as amnesties between social belligerents. Whether it means permanent peace or not, good form compels at least an outer suspension of all expression, by word or look, of any but the most friendly regard, while people are fellow guests at the dinner table of mutual friends. Such self-restraint and good breeding permit here nothing less than a perfect concealment of all private animosities, and this, not infrequently, brings about a reconciliation with, or at least a tranquil contemplation of persons whom we have so fervently disliked that we were unable to suspect them of possessing one social charm or Christian virtue. This is one of several high missions of the dinner party.

## DINNER FAVORS.

It is said, and doubtless it is true, that dinner favors were born in the brain of some ostentatious person who had a superfluous amount of money that he found difficulty in spending in a way which would be sure to be noticed and suitably remembered. He laid before his guests the most sumptuous banquets that his caterer could devise, and gave a costly gift to each one. A *menu* laid by every cover has been, not infrequently, a work of art, individual and beautiful. Gems from the lapidary and goldsmith, jewels in rich settings, superb fans, hand-wrought silken sashes or scarfs, silver or gold bouquet-holders with flowers in them are some of the expensive presents by which certain hosts not long since compensated their guests for sitting at their tables; and to be quite just to both entertainers and entertained, the latter were entitled to other remuneration than the society of those who secured them for vulgarly lavish banquets.

To-day, good form permits, and even advises that flowers be provided for each guest, but it does not command them. A single superb blossom or a cluster of

lesser beauties may be laid by each plate, accompanied by a pin, somewhere thrust through a stem, for fastening the delicate things at once to the breast or belt, or to the coat lapel.

If table bouquets for women are for the hand, and not for the girdle, they may be tied by long, handsome ribbons, the varying colors of which, as they partly lie on the table and partly fall over its edge, may be charmingly effective, especially where there is a restoration of silver and a banishment of gayly decorated china; and table covers of richly dyed silks.

The boutonnière, of course, remains in vogue, with only its simple pin.

To be sure, there are farewell dinners now and then, at which *souvenirs* are provided, but these no longer testify solely to the sums of money a host likes to expend. They are only delicate, individual reminders of the past, but they may be as artistic as their presenter can devise. Glittering and emphatic evidences of cost are now not only bad form, but are decidedly offensive.

It is rumored that at one of the last dinners given by one who had only what he could purchase with money, but much of that, the host laid such unpleasantly showy and costly favors by each plate, that several of his guests declined to carry them from the table, and they were sent to their homes, only to be returned again. This episode brought disgrace to the whim.

## TABLE CARDS.

AMONG essentials in formal dinner-giving are table cards. At an unceremonious dinner, cards may sometimes be unnecessary, but they are always a pleasant addition to its appointments. Sometimes they are plain, fine cards with nothing but names written upon them, but oftener they are ornamental or amusing contributions to the success of a dinner party.

At large dinners, as was said, they are a necessity, because they are the only means by which guests find the places assigned them, although diagrams in their robing rooms, or cards offered to them upon trays that await their arrival in the hall, acquaint them at once which side, whether right or left, of the host, they are to sit at dinner.

At small parties the duty of directing guests falls wholly upon the host, if table cards are omitted, because he is the first to enter the dining-room, and it is supposed that he has been made acquainted by the hostess, with the order of seating his guests, previous to the arrival of the company; but the memory of man in such matters, important as they are to the

graces of grouping of dinner guests, is sometimes fallible.

Cards with the names of guests legibly written upon them spare the host a stress of perplexed recollection, which is no small matter at a moment when he requires an undiverted use of his finest social resources to stir the minds of timid guests or to steady those of effusive ones, and to draw from both their cleverest mental accomplishments. The burden of remembering small things is a torture to unobservant men, and to men who are wearied with many outside cares and who should find only tranquillity and mental refreshment in the hospitalities of their own houses. Even though a host may be endowed with fortunate brains which are likely to retain small instructions, still location cards, with apt quotations, dainty or droll devices, pictures, portraits, or not unrefined caricatures upon them, set dinner guests at once into lively, and it may chance, into brilliant moods that charm their fellows, and, what is sometimes of more consequence, delight themselves.

Cards relieve the hostess of that chance fear that comes, from nobody knows where, when the wordless question, "Will my husband forget?" finds her mind ready to listen.

Many persons keep a book in which they arrange dinner cards. Written above or below them are the names of their hosts, and their dinner escorts; also *bon mots* heard at the entertainment. The date is

added, provided it is not upon the dinner card. This volume serves as a social, epigrammatic, biographic, and autobiographic record, and not infrequently, it is a work of artistic beauty.

Upon table cards may be printed or written, quotations from Shakespeare, Browning, Tennyson, Longfellow, Whittier, etc., and from the Avesta, the Koran, the Greek poets, and from any other writings, prophetic, proverbial, descriptive or humorous; but they must not be otherwise than appropriate to the occasion and to the guests.

Original expressions are preferred by many dinner-givers, because they can be made individually apt, or impressive, but they must never be otherwise than apparently impersonal. That is, peculiarities of the individual, his opinions or purposes, whether eccentric or only original, cannot be hinted at by a sentence on a dinner card. Such jests have sometimes been played on men at club dinners, but they are always a danger to friendship, and are in very bad form. Now and then personalities have found place at tables where guests had a right to expect more delicacy.

Cards of parchment, porcelain, or egg-shell paper, colored or white, with only a quotation printed across the top of each, and the name of a guest written below it, or perhaps cards with dainty illustrations, are in good form, all of which may be selected at the stores of first-class makers of fine stationery, and at many book stores.

Sometimes the names of guests are written with liquid gold, silver, or bronze, upon plain, fine cards, or are written with ink that contrasts in color with that of the ink in which the quotations are inscribed. Names are sometimes written in fanciful hues or metallic inks upon a ribbon that ties a bouquet, in which instances the same ink writes the names of men guests upon table cards.



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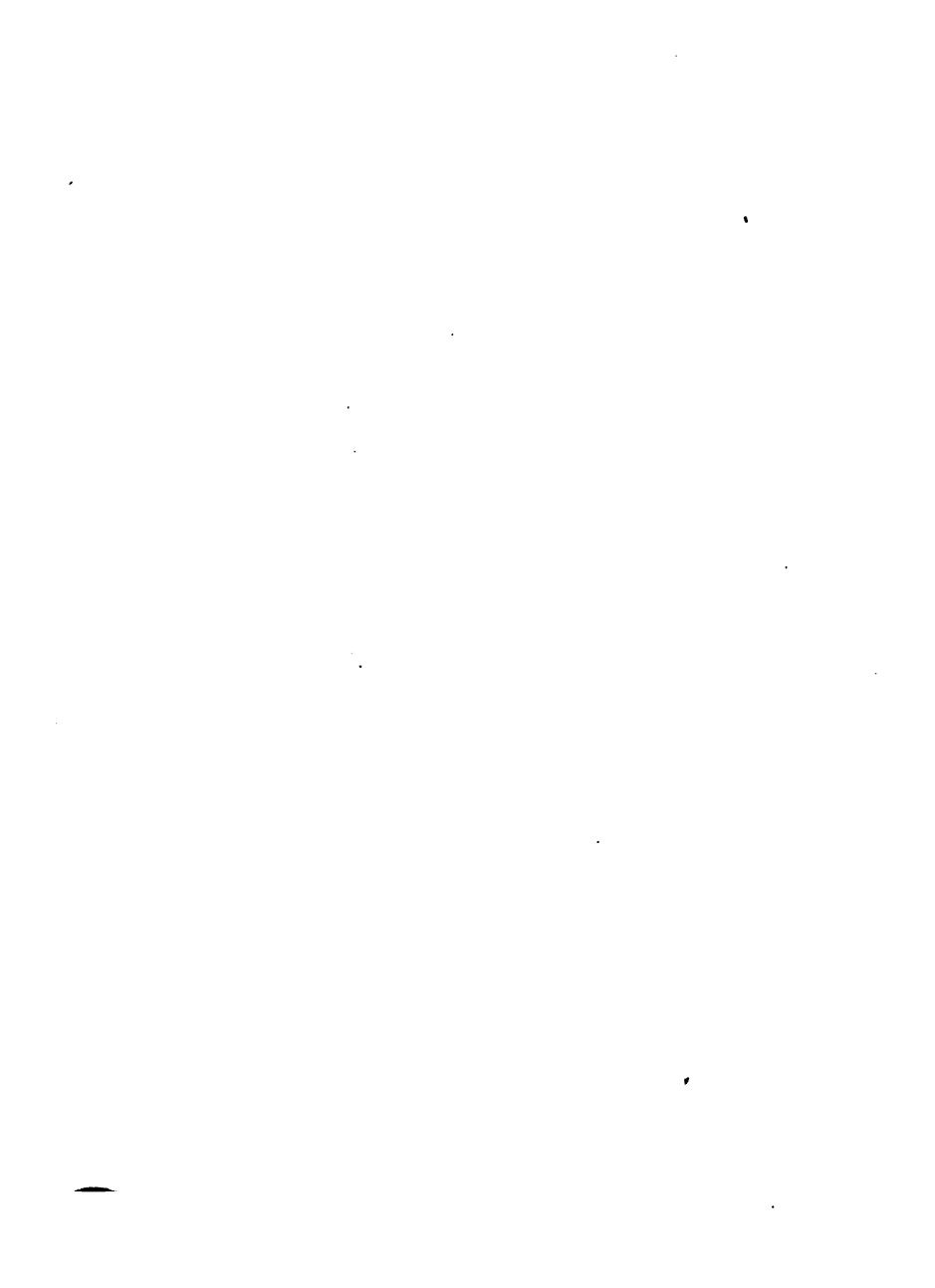
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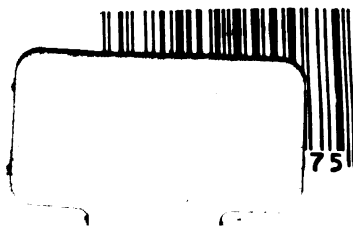
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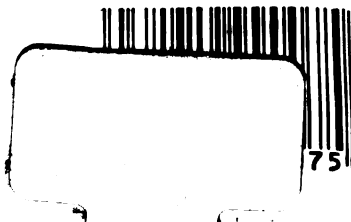
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